



# PROCEEDINGS

1<sup>st</sup> REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Globalization: Current Trends in  
Educational Leadership and Management**



# PROCEEDINGS

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ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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## **DOES WISDOM MATTER? A CASE STUDY OF STRATEGIC SCHOOL LEADERS**

HAIRUDDIN MOHD. ALI

### **ABSTRACT**

*Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoEM) formulated an Educational Master Plan (2006-2010) to ensure the achievement of National Mission. It is a continuation of the previous plan that emphasized on accessibility, equity, quality and as well as to enhance the educational management and leadership effectiveness and efficiency aspect. The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategic leadership characteristics for Quality Malaysian National Primary Schools Leader (QMNP SL) and how the findings of the study implicate the present practices of educational management and leadership that are pertinent to the quality of education. Approximately 600 senior management team comprised senior teachers from 150 schools were randomly selected to complete the 10-pages survey questionnaires (52 seven-point Likert scale items). The collection centre received approximately 420 completed survey questionnaires from the sampled schools. The employment of data screening process finally omitted 14 out of 420 cases prior to further data analysis. SPSS 15.0 (specifically principal component analysis) was used to determine the underlying factors of the strategic leadership characteristics of the school leaders. The study also employed a full fledge Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) software AMOS 16.0 and SPSS 15.0 to confirm the dimensionality and the psychometric properties of the scales respectively. Although Davies and Davies (2004) suggested that strategic school leaders must possess all nine (9) strategic leadership characteristics, however the study confirmed that QMNPSL only possess six (6) out of nine stipulated characteristics. One out of 2 missing characteristics was 'wisdom', which is of extremely important for an efficient and effective leadership in his/her capacity to realize the MoEM Master Plan particularly at grassroots level. Hence, without proper effective actions taken, the future of Malaysian primary education will be at stake. The findings from the study provide useful information to senior management team members of the respective schools, District and States Education Department. IAB as an educational and leadership training wing for MoEM perhaps need to restructure its training curriculum and the delivery of training as well. At least these three pertinent aspects, to certain extent will contribute to the achievement of the goals (mainly accessibility, equity, quality and as well as to enhance the educational management effectiveness and efficiency) stipulated in the MoEM Education Master Plan (2006-2010).*

**Keywords:** *Quality Malaysian National Primary School Leaders; strategic leadership characteristics; training curriculum.*



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Quality School Improvement Program (QSEIP), at least in Malaysia is significant to the achievement of school education for all as well as an agent for the achievement of world-class education system. Hence, the positive changes need to be realized both at organizational (school) level as well as within the classrooms. These in turn depend on the commitment of schools in fulfilling the expectations of children, parents and other stakeholders. From another perspective, QSEIP refers to a systematic approach by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to improve the quality of school education that ensuring a perfect environment for quality education.

As stated in international research for QSEIP, Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994), Stoll and Fink (1996) and Harris (1999), emphasized that the educational leadership fraternity have widely discussed, disputed and documented most of the characteristics of quality school education improvement efforts. Successive studies also have clearly shown that purposeful leadership, teacher collaboration and central focus on learning outcomes are the factors that support positive (quality) school change (Fullan, 1993). In this respect however, there are relatively few relevant studies on the characteristics of successful QSEIP in action especially in Malaysia.

### **1.1 Overview Of QSEIP for National Primary Schools in Malaysia**

As a centralized system of governance, and as one of the largest and most vibrant ministry, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoEM) succeeded in formulating an Educational Development Master Plan (EDMP, 2006-2010) and wholly accepted as the backbone of all (other ministries) master plans in ensuring the achievement of Malaysia's national mission.<sup>4</sup> EDMP is a continuation of the previous plan that emphasized on accessibility, equity, quality and as well as to enhance educational management and leadership effectiveness and efficiency. Hence, one of EDMP's long-term objectives is to develop and enhance the QSEIP for the benefit of Malaysian quality education for all levels and categories of pupils.

As of June 2005, there are 5,761 National Primary Schools (NPS) accommodating approximately 2.4 million young pupils in Malaysian system of education. Every NPS is expected to attract and enroll various races (and ethnic groups). However, this key objective has never achieved. Consequently, the government's goal and initiative to depend on NPS as platforms for national unity effort will definitely be a failure if specific effective measures are not implemented. Since the Malaysian government still believes on the NPS unity platform strategy (initiatives), the development of QSEIP becomes a major focus in the MoEM's EDMP (2006-2010).

<sup>4</sup> It is part of Malaysia's Vision 2020.



As early as 2005, MoEM had selected 350 NPS for the QSEIP. As the first step, 350 school leaders (principals) were given five days of QSEIP training (namely strategic planning in education) in Institut Aminuddin Baki. Within two months, all schools involved were required to prepare and document their own five years school strategic development plan (2006-2010). As of the beginning of 2006, all 350 schools were expected to manage and implement their full fledged strategic plans as well as to enhance their strategic leadership skills. Perhaps this is the best moment for MoEM to monitor the Strategic Leadership Characteristics for Quality Malaysian National Primary Schools Leaders (QMNPSSL) particularly for those who are involved with QSEIP. The main objective of QSEIP is to enable the Malaysian educational system to nurture and develop strong, excellent and high performing schools particularly among the NPS. In this respect, MoEM's EDMP (2006-2010) has determined eleven (11) characteristics of high performing and high impact NPS namely: (i) possess highly trained and quality leaders and teachers; (ii) able to provide and implement customer oriented curriculum; (iii) able to provide and implement effective co-curricular activities; (iv) achieve excellent student moral and personality achievement; (v) practice internalization of national aspiration; (vi) achieve zero illiteracy; (vii) exhibit healthy school culture and climate; (viii) possess adequate and strong support system; (ix) attain excellent academic achievement; (x) able to provide Chinese and Tamil subjects as part of the national curriculum; (xi) possess excellent and high quality infrastructures.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The first objective of the study is to examine the Strategic Leadership Characteristics for Quality Malaysian National Primary Schools Leaders (QMNPSSL) who involved in QSEIP and how the findings of the study implicate the present practices of educational management and leadership that are pertinent to quality system of education in Malaysia. Second objective is to examine which strategic leadership characteristics for QMNPSSL are dominant. In general, a conceptual model of the study as in Figure 2.1 below determines the objectives of the study. The conceptual model of the study is recursive as there is no feedback loops (Arbuckle & Wothke, 2006).

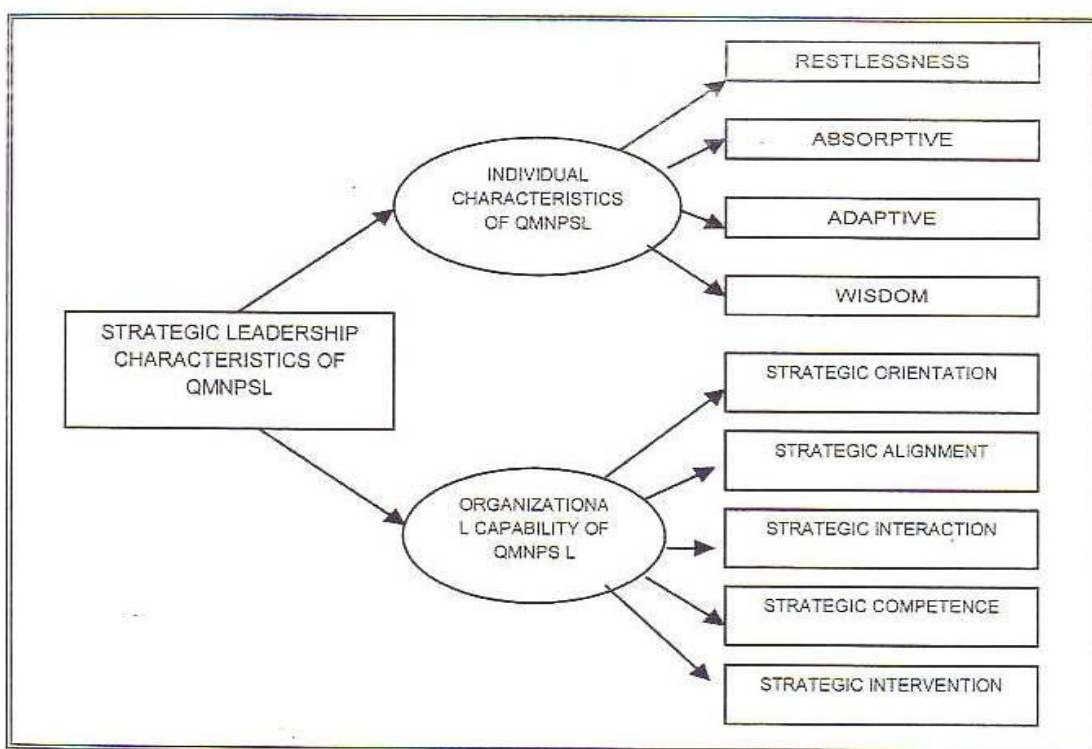
## **2.0 UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS**

Researchers in the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement consistently emphasized on the importance of leadership for organizational change, development and improvement, and in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching (Harris, 2004). Harris again emphasized the needs to raise the standards and to improve the outcomes of schooling. This increases the pressure on school leaders to secure, sustain and demonstrate school improvements. This inevitably extended the changing roles of the school leaders (Cranston, 2000) and those serving in other key leadership positions (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) within the school.



The quality of strategic leadership characteristics in schools is the central activity that facilitates and drives the strategic cycle of a strategically focused school (Davies, 2004; Davies & Davies, 2004). If the school leaders are supporting and enhancing the development of strategic leadership in schools, Davies suggested a framework to understand of what strategic leadership characteristics might comprise. Hence, in this case, Davies identified nine factors associated with strategic leadership characteristics of school leaders. Davies categorized these nine (9) factors into two parts or sub domains. The first domain is the ability of a school leader (in his/her capacity) to undertake and implementing successfully the strategic organizational activities. Second domain is his /her ability in displaying specific strategic individual characteristics. The following are the detailed categorization of the two-sub domains:

**Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Model of the Study: Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL**





- (i) Strategic QMNPSL have the Organizational Capability (ORGCAPAB) to:
- be strategically oriented (STRATEGIC ORIENTATION)
  - translate strategy into action (STRATEGIC TRANSLATION)
  - align people and organizations (STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT)
  - determine effective strategic intervention points (STRATEGIC INTERVENTION)
  - develop strategic competencies (STRATEGIC COMPETENCE)
- (ii) Strategic QMNPSL display Individual Characteristics (INDVCHAR) such as,
- a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present (RESTLESSNESS)
  - absorptive capacity (ABSORPTIVE)
  - adaptive capacity (ADAPTIVE)
  - wisdom (WISDOM)

As stated in the objectives of the study, the hypotheses are as follows:

- H1 (a) QMNPSL in the QSEIP in Malaysia possess **five** (5) ORGCAPAB such as,

- H1.1 (a) STRATEGIC ORIENTATION
- H1.2 (a) STRATEGIC TRANSLATION
- H1.3 (a) STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT
- H1.4 (a) STRATEGIC INTERVENTION
- H1.5 (a) STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

- H1 (b) QMNPSL in the QSEIP in Malaysia display **four** INDVCHAR such as:

- H1.1 (b) a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present (RESTLESSNESS)
- H1.2 (b) absorptive capacity (ABSORPTIVE)
- H1.3 (b) adaptive capacity (ADAPTIVE)
- H1.4 (b) wisdom (WISDOM)

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Sampling**

The study used probability sampling as it provided statistical basis that a sample should represent the target population and consequently has the ability to generalize the findings of the entire population (Fink, 1995). The sampling units were the schools chosen for the study while the sampling elements were all members of senior management team comprised senior assistants/deputy leaders of administration, student affairs, extra co-curricular and afternoon session supervisor. The study used a sampling frame comprising a list of 350 schools involved in QSEIP. Out of these 350 schools, the study randomly selected 150 schools as samples (sampling units).

As guidance for survey questionnaires completion, the researcher contacted all representatives of senior management members from the selected schools prior the commence deadline. The study expected 600 senior management team members (sampling elements) from these sampling units would respond to the survey questionnaires. Thus, the expected margin of error (accuracy) should  $\pm 4\%$  and confidence interval at 95% (Ferguson, 1981; Vockell & Asher, 1995). The researcher mailed all survey questionnaires to the Senior Assistants/Deputy Head for Administration of the respective national primary schools. A letter, that described the administrative part (and instructions) of the survey questionnaires were attached together. The researcher directed all schools involved in the study to mail the completed survey questionnaires using the enclosed envelopes provided.

#### **3.2 Instrumentation**

Dillman (1983) emphasized the quality of questionnaire design as an important factor for self-administered instruments. As for data collection process, the study used ten (10) pages Bahasa Malaysia (National Language) survey instrument comprising 35 items. Back-translation process of the survey questionnaires confirmed the original translation (Brislin, Lonner & Thorndike, 1973). The survey questionnaires comprised filtered questions (states, region, school's category, enrolment etc.), a section comprised 35 items on strategic leadership characteristics based on Davies and Davies (2004) and additional space for respondents to provide comments and other information. The study used multiple-item measures for all constructs as in the hypothesized model (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980). As the samples for this particular study is considered large (600 respondents), Churchill (2004) suggested the study to use 7-point Likert scale (the values starts at 1 = Rarely, 4 = Occasionally and 7 = Almost Always).

As suggested by Bourque and Clark (1992) and Zikmund (1997), the researcher conducted two stages of pretests for its survey questionnaires. In the first stage, two educational management and leadership experts screened the items searching for inconsistencies such as ambiguous items, wordings, leading (and



misleading) questions and biases. The pretest process managed to screen and identified unclear sections especially the directions and a few ambiguous items. As for the second stage pretest process, the study selected a group of thirty (30) senior management teams from the sampling frame to give their responses to the survey questionnaires. As a result, generally there were no problems with the responses to the survey questionnaires (compared to the first stage pretest). In terms of internal consistency the Cronbach's Alphas of the indicators were STRATEGIC ORIENTATION (STRORIENTAT) = 0.8895, STRATEGIC INTERACTION (STRINTERACT) = 0.8911, STRATEGIC COMPETENCE (STRCOMPETE) = 0.9074, STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT (STRALIGNMEN)= 0.8691, STRATEGIC TRANSLATION (STRTRANSLAT) = 0.9420, RESTLESSNESS = 0.8658, ABSORPTIVE = 0.9040, ADAPTIVE = 0.8238 and WISDOM = 0.9346. The study considered Cronbach's coefficient alphas for all nine measured variables as acceptable and good (Sekaran, 2003 & Nunnally, 1978) because the values were between 0.8238 (lowest) and 0.9346 (highest).

### **3.3 Statistical Analyses**

The study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique for statistical analyses. SEM is a multivariate technique combining aspects of multiple regression and factor analysis to estimate series of interrelated dependence relationships simultaneously (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006). In this aspect, the study used SPSS Analysis of Moment Structures or SPSS AMOS 16.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 2006). For clarity, the study exhibits hypothesized model of the study or SEM model (Figure 3.1) as causal modeling, confirmatory analysis and latent variable modeling (Loehlin, 1992).

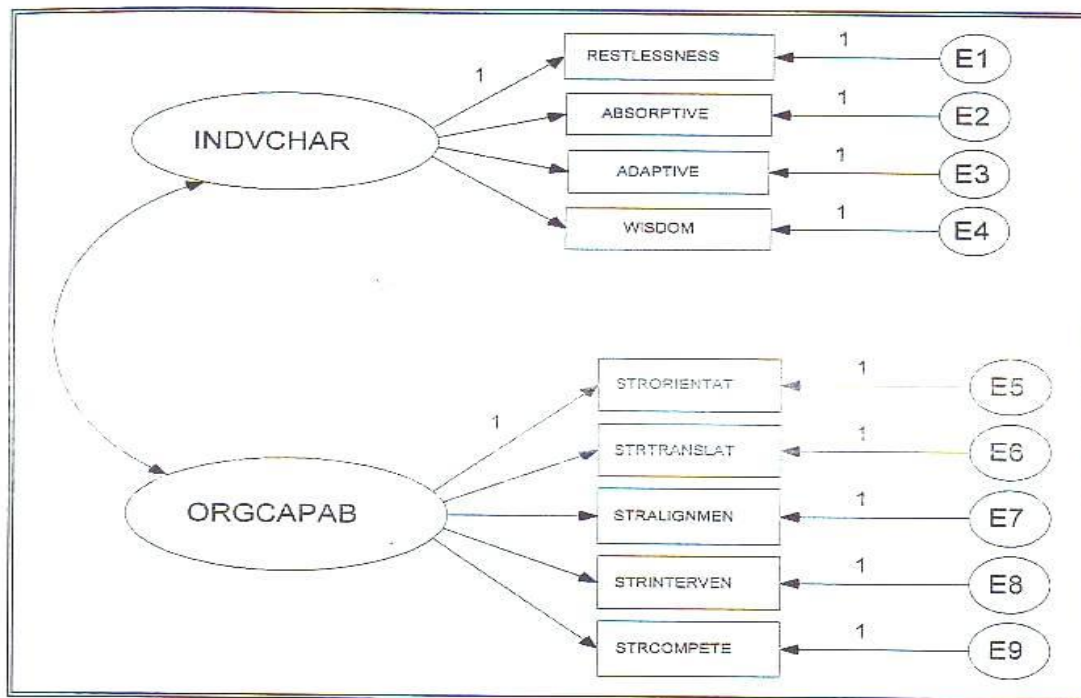
### **3.4 Goodness-of-fit criteria evaluation**

As mentioned earlier in the research methodology section, the study used SPSS AMOS 16.0 data-fitting program (Arbuckle & Wothke, 2006) to analyze and estimate the hypothesized model of the study. This software adopted maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) in generating estimates of the full-fledged SEM. Since the software also analyzed covariance matrices, the estimation procedure satisfied the underlying statistical distribution theory, and thereby yielding estimates of desirable properties (Arbuckle & Wothke, 2006).

Once the estimates of the model were established, the study applied a set of measures to evaluate its good-fit. The consistency of the model with the data determined by nine measures, which reflected the overall model fit. Next, the study examined the magnitude and direction of individual parameter estimate to determine its reasonableness. The examination included the offending estimates such as negative error variances and theoretically inconsistent coefficients that could undermine the validity of the model.



Five manifest/measured variables namely STRORIENTAT, STRTRANSLAT, STRINTERACT, STRALIGNMEN, and STRCOMPETE measured endogenous latent variable, organizational capability or ORGCAPAB. Four manifest variables namely RESTLESSNESS, ABSORPTIVE, ADAPTIVE and WISDOM measured endogenous latent variable namely individual characteristics or INDVCHAR.



**Figure 3.1:** *Hypothesized Model of the Study: Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL*

## 4.0 RESULTS AND ANALYSES

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

As exhibited in Table 4.1, this study covered almost all states in Malaysia. However, only Labuan was not included because the study considered it as part of the state of Sabah when the study commenced. Out of 150 schools, 135 (90%) responded to the survey. From these 135 schools, 420 (70%) senior management team members successfully completed the survey questionnaires and mailed them to the collection centre. With 420 responses, the confidence interval and margin of error were 95% and  $\pm 5\%$  respectively (Ferguson, 1981; Vockell & Asher, 1995).

Out of 135 sampling units, 125 schools represented the NPS while the rest (10 schools) were mission schools. In terms of school size, 115 schools were categorized as A-grade, 16 were categorized as B-grade and the remainder as under-enrolled schools. Looking at the gender of school leaders, 88 were males compared to 54 females (missing cases of 13). From the list, 70 were urban schools, 57 were rural and eight (8) were from the remote areas. In general, the respondents seemed to be evenly distributed and covered almost whole Malaysia.

As discussed earlier, the study employed SEM for its statistical technique. In that case, the study needed to overcome some practical issues such as sample size and missing data, multivariate normality and absence of outliers, linearity, absence of multi-co linearity and singularity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). As the study was very much aware of these requirements, the researcher managed to conduct data screening prior to the segment of model testing. With the final sample size of 406, the study considered the sample size adequate (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

**Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Nos.	Characteristics		
1	States	School Responses	Senior Management Responses (%)
	Johor	7	23 (3.833)
	Kedah	9	28 (4.666)
	Kelantan	5	17 (2.833)
	Melaka	7	23 (3.833)
	N. Sembilan	3	10 (1.666)
	P.Pinang	8	24 (4.000)
	Pahang	22	62 (10.33)
	Perak	19	60 (10.00)
	Perlis	3	10 (1.666)
	Sabah	8	25 (4.166)
	Sarawak	22	67 (11.16)
	Selangor	5	19 (3.166)
	Terengganu	12	35 (5.833)
	WPKL (FT)	5	17 (2.833)
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>135/150 (90%)</b>	<b>420/600 (70%)</b>
2	Types of school	National school	125
		Mission school	10
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>135</b>
3	Grade of school	Grade A	115
		Grade B	16
		Under enrolled	4
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>135</b>
4	Gender of school head	Male	88
		Female	54
		(Missing cases)	13
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>135</b>
5	Location of school	Urban	70
		Rural	57
		Remote	8
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>135</b>



#### 4.2 Hypothesized Model: Factors Underlying the Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL

The study applied Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on the data collected (N=406) in order to confirm the factors underlying strategic leadership characteristics of the QMNPSL. For this specific purpose, the study embarked AMOS 16.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 2006) for maximum likelihood estimation in generating estimates of parameters in the measurement model. The results of the CFA produced fit indices which some of it exceeded their respective critical value as exhibited in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Fit Indices of the Hypothesized Model**

Measures	Fit Indices	Threshold Values
CMIN/df	6.974	Less than 5
GFI	0.906	0.90 and above
AGFI	0.837	0.90 and above
RMSEA	0.121	0.08 and less
TLI	0.955	0.90 and above
NFI	0.962	0.90 and above
CFI	0.967	0.90 and above
RMR	0.184	The nearer to zero the better

**Note:**

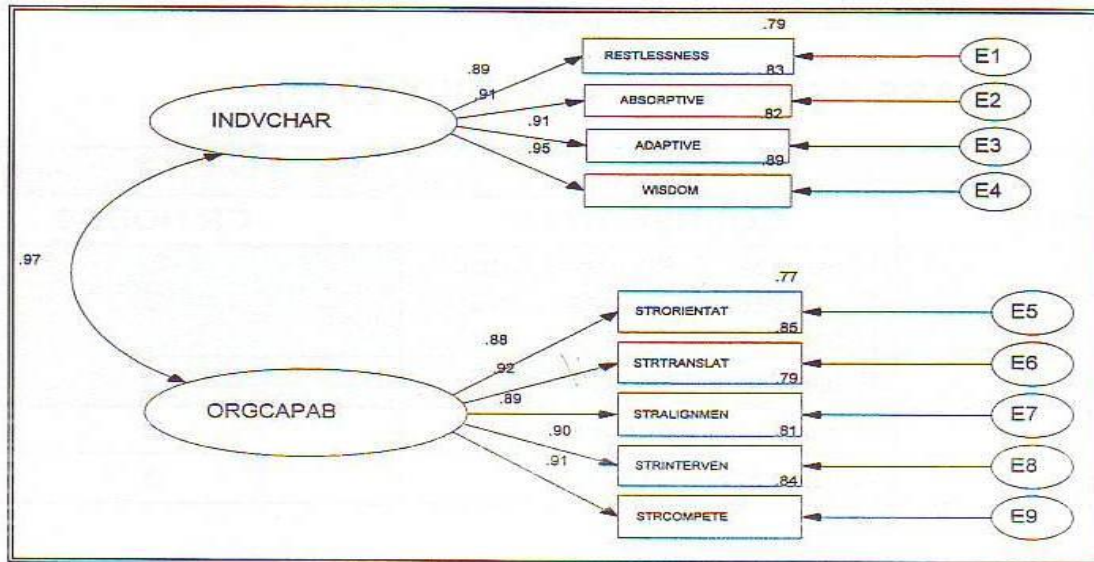
- Number of variables in the model = 20
- Number of observed variables = 9
- Number of unobserved variables = 11
- Number of exogenous variables = 11
- Number of endogenous variables = 9
- Number of distinct sample moments = 45
- Number of distinct parameters to be estimated = 19
- Sample size = 406; Degrees of Freedom (45 – 19) = 26
- Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 181.33;  $p = 0.000$

As emphasized by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006), the likelihood-ratio chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) is the most fundamental measure of overall fit. As exhibited by Table 4.2, the hypothesized model exhibits likelihood-ratio chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of (26, N=406) = 181.33;  $p = 0.000$ . The hypothesized model yields an unacceptable level of discrepancy between the observed data and the hypothesized model divided by the degrees of freedom (CMIN/df = 6.974). Other fit indices particularly AGFI and RMSEA did not fulfill the threshold values indicated although the values of other fit indices such as TLI, NFI, CFI and GFI somewhat better than their respective thresholds. These values reflect the needs for the study to revise the model as in the next section.

Figure 4.1 exhibits the generated output of the hypothesized model of the study. While four indicators of RESTLESSNESS (0.89), ABSORPTIVE (0.91), ADAPTIVE (0.91) and WISDOM (0.95) measured the latent variable, INDVCHAR, five indicators of STORIENTAT (0.88), STRTRANSLAT (0.92), STRALIGNMEN (0.89), STRINTERACT (0.90) and STRCOMPETE (0.91) measured ORGCAPAB. The



correlation between the two latent variables (INDVCHAR & ORGCAPAB) is 0.97. At this point, the study assumed that all indicators or measured variables for INDVCHAR and ORGCAPAB stayed intact and relevant.

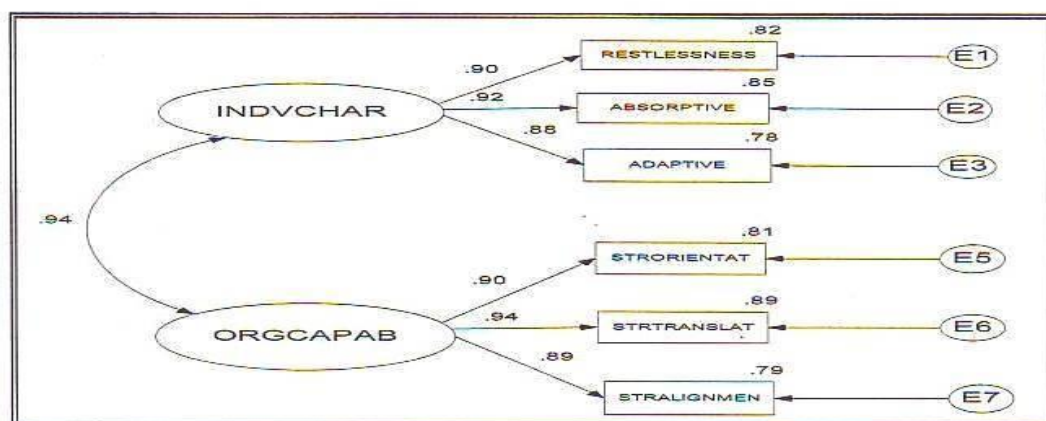


**Figure 4.1:** *Generated Output of the Hypothesized Model (Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL)*

#### 4.3 Revised Evaluation Model of Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL

Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggested that there are at least two reasons for modifying a SEM model. Firstly, to improve fit and parsimony, and secondly, is to test the hypotheses. The re-specification of the model involved omitting certain parts of the model with the aim of improving the significance of the model and hence improving its good-fit. Thus, the revised model supposedly able to display better causal relationships compared to the original or hypothesized model. The study used the revised model (Figure 4.2) to discuss the overall model fit.

Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) considered a Chi-square difference test as one of the basic methods for model modification. The Chi-square for the hypothesized model with 26 degrees of freedom was  $\chi^2 = 181.33$ ;  $p = 0.000$ , and the Chi-square for the revised model with 8 degrees of freedom was  $\chi^2 = 23.34$ ;  $p = 0.000$ . Therefore the Chi-square difference test (or likelihood ratio for maximum likelihood) yielded  $\chi^2 = (181.33 - 23.34) = 157.99$ ,  $df = (26 - 8) = 18$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . This proved that the re-specification of the model significantly improved the model's fit.



**Figure 4.2:** Revised Model of the Study (Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL)

In general, all good-fit indices as in Table 4.3 show very remarkable and significant results. The level of discrepancy between the observed data and the revised model divided by the degrees of freedom yielded better fit at CMIN/df = 2.917 compared to 6.974 for the hypothesized model. As for absolute fit, GFI = 0.982 and RMR = 0.087 for the revised model. The RMSEA value was at 0.069 well below the threshold value of 0.08. All these values indicated better fit for the measurement model.

In terms of incremental fit measures, AGFI, TLI and NFI values were at 0.954, 0.989 and 0.991 respectively. All these values satisfied the threshold values. There were also no indications of insignificant values, thus proving that the revised model almost perfectly fitted the dataset. As a conclusion, all three types of good-fit indices, which the study discussed previously, managed to prove that the study had successfully developed and identified better fit and parsimonious model.

**Table 4.3:** Fit indices of the Revised Model

Measures	Fit Indices	Threshold Values
CMIN/df	2.917	Less than 5
GFI	0.982	0.90 and above
AGFI	0.954	0.90 and above
RMSEA	0.069	0.08 and less
TLI	0.989	0.90 and above
NFI	0.991	0.90 and above
CFI	0.994	0.90 and above
RMR	0.087	The nearer to zero the better

**Note:**

- Number of variables in the model = 14
- Number of observed variables = 6
- Number of unobserved variables = 8
- Number of exogenous variables = 8
- Number of endogenous variables = 6



- Number of distinct sample moments = 21
- Number of distinct parameters to be estimated = 13
- Sample size = 406; Degrees of Freedom (21-13) = 8
- Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 23.339;  $p = 0.003$

#### **4.4 Revised Model for Strategic Leadership Characteristics of QMNPSL**

Having assessed the overall model and the aspects of measurement model, the next step was to examine the estimated coefficients for both practical and theoretical implications (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006). After the re-specification of the measurement model, both latent variables (INDVCHAR & ORGCAPAB) measured by three indicators each. Indicators as measured by their respective standardized regression weights RESTLESSNESS (0.90), ABSORPTIVE (0.92) and ADAPTIVE (0.88) measured latent variable INDVCHAR. Indicators as measured by their respective standardized regression weights STRORIENTAT (0.90), STRTRANSLAT (0.94) and SRTALIGNMEN (0.89) measured latent variable ORGCAPAB.

As a conclusion, the study confirmed and determined the presence of six (6) indicators of strategic leadership characteristics of QMNPSL that involved in QSEIP. The study excluded three indicators (WISDOM for INDVCHAR; and STRTRANSLAT and STRCOMPETE for ORGCAPAB) in its attempt to confirm the presence of all nine (9) characteristics of strategic leadership for QMNPSL that involved in QSEIP. The correlation between the two latent variables (INDVCHAR & ORGCAPAB) is still high at 0.94. At this point, the study proved that all indicators or measured variables for INDVCHAR and ORGCAPAB stayed intact and relevant.

#### **4.5 Testing of the hypotheses**

Byrne (1994) suggested that SEM is a statistical methodology that takes on hypotheses testing (i.e. confirmatory) approach of the multivariate analysis. Further, Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) in Hairuddin (2006) also viewed SEM as a confirmatory technique for model testing. Thus, all research hypotheses would be accepted or rejected based upon the employment of SEM to the dataset.

The study used the SEM results and significance level of 0.05 to test all the hypotheses. The study also used the results in Table 4.3 and the generated output as in Figure 4.2 to examine whether the revised model supported the research hypotheses (or vice-versa) of the study. The study conducted the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by employing the AMOS 16.0. As a result, SEM and AMOS 16.0 confirmed that latent variable INDVCHAR (as one of the strategic leadership components) was represented by three indicators (RESTLESSNESS, ABSORPTIVE & ADAPTIVE) while ORGCAPAB (as another strategic leadership component) was represented only by three indicators (STRORIENTAT, STRTRANSLAT & STRALIGNMEN). The study finally omitted two indicators for ORGCAPAB (STRCOMPETEN & STRINTERVEN)



and an indicator for INDVCHAR (WISDOM) as they all possessed small loadings (Figure 4.2).

Although the study attempted to examine and prove that QMNPSL for QSEIP in Malaysia possessed five organizational capabilities, the findings from the study however confirmed the presence of only **three** (out of **five**) organizational capabilities dimension. The confirmed organizational capabilities dimension were "strategically oriented" (STRORIENTAT) [H1.1 (a)], "translate strategy into action" (STRTRANSLAT) [H1.2 (a)], and "align people and organizations (STRALIGNMEN) [H1.3 (a)]. The study was unable to confirm the presence of the two remaining organizational capabilities dimension among the QMNPSL, "determine effective strategic intervention points" (STRINTERVEN) [H1.4 (a)] and "develop strategic competencies" (STRCOMPETE) [H1.5 (a)]. Briefly, the study only supported **three** out of five hypotheses.

Pertaining to the strategic leadership characteristics of the QMNPSL for QSEIP, the study intended to examine and to prove that all QMNPSL concerned displayed **four individual characteristic dimensions**. The confirmed individual characteristics displayed by the QMNPSL were "a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present" (RESTLESSNESS) [H1.1 (b)], "absorptive capacity" (ABSORPTIVE) [H1.2 (b)], and "adaptive capacity" (ADAPTIVE) [H1.3 (b)]. However, the study failed to confirm that one important indicator (WISDOM) was one of the strategic leadership characteristics of the QMNPSL. Hence, the study supported only **three** hypotheses (out of four individual characteristics displayed by the QMNPSL).

## 5.0 DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study identified all senior management staff/teachers (also known as deputies) such as senior assistants for administration, student affairs, extra co-curricular activities and the afternoon session supervisor (who were the respondents for the study) were the most powerful group in the studied schools. This study strongly assumed that they managed to influence and exert considerable pressure on to the leadership of the schools concerned. As the deputies were always shadowing their school leaders, they were generally the most appropriate subordinates who could evaluate their respective leaders very well.

### 5.1 Organizational Capability of the QMNPSL

In case of QMNPSL for QSEIP in Malaysia, the study confirmed that they possessed three dimensions of organizational capability (ORGCAPAB) of strategic leadership characteristics as discussed previously. Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004) described the first dimension as "be strategically oriented" (STRORIENTAT). It was obviously clear that the QMNPSL for QSEIP were strategically oriented as required by the stakeholders (MOEM) and hence conformed to the Standards of Competency for Malaysian School Principals (2006). With the possession of this



particular capability, the QMNPSL also fulfilled the Quality Standards for Malaysian Education (2004). This is one of the prerequisites and predictors for excellent and effective schools in Malaysia. As compared to the United Kingdom (Preedy, Glatter & Wise, 2003), strategic planning and strategic leadership concept were introduced quite recently in the Malaysian education system especially in conjunction with the development and inception of the EDMP (2006-2010). Hence, the year 2010 will witness the achievements of the strategic implementation of the plan.

Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004) described "ability to translate strategy into action" (STRTRANSLAT) as one of the organizational capability dimensions of strategic leadership characteristics. Kaplan and Norton (2004) viewed "ability to translate strategy into action" as an essential and pertinent factor for the success of the strategy management implementation. In Malaysia, the study confirmed that the QMNPSL possessed the "ability to translate strategy into action". With the possession of this particular capability, it would enable the stakeholders to differentiate between the true strategic implementers (QMNPSL) from the mere rhetoric and mediocre leadership. The strategic implementers were those who able to turnaround the schools as compared to the rhetoric leaders who were just holding on to the status-quo and survived. As the ability to translate strategy into action is one of the main components in strategy management implementation (Kaplan & Norton, 2004) and strategic planning for public organization (Bryson, 2003), the study successfully identified it to be one of the leadership skills needed by the QMNPSL. Hence, this will fulfill both the Standards of Competencies for Malaysian School Principals (2006) and Quality Standards for Malaysian Education (2004).

Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004) described, "align people and organization" (STRALIGNMEN) as one of the dominant organizational capability dimensions of strategic leadership characteristics. This study however successfully confirmed that STRALIGNMEN was one of the dimensions underlying the organizational capability of the QMNPSL. The QMNPSL deputies that evaluated his or her school leaders confirmed this. From the perception of the deputies, the leaders possessed the required leadership powers that enabled them to align his or her staff with the organization". Such powers were legitimate powers, coercive powers, reward powers, expert powers and referent powers.

Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004) described "ability to develop strategic capabilities" (STRCOMPETE) as one of the organizational capability (ORGCAPAB) dimensions of strategic leadership characteristic. The study confirmed that the QMNPSL for QSEIP did not possess the STRCOMPETE. Among others, STRCOMPETE comprised "ability to identify strategies to improve student learning", "no culture of "scapegoat", "ability to interpret data for student achievement", and "team problem solving". As an instructional leader, it was a requirement for QMNPSL to be skillful in identifying the learning improvement strategies as the student-learning factor was considered the most important component in the Standards of Competencies for Malaysian School Principals (2006) and Quality Standards for Malaysian Education



(2004). In addition, team problem solving and the absence of "scapegoat culture" will fulfill the statement that "the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture" (Hargreaves, 2003). However, with the absence of this dominant component among the QMNPSL, this might become the great hindrance for these leaders to steer their school successfully in future.

Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004) identified "determine effective strategic intervention points" (STRINTERVEN) as one of the underlying indicators for organizational capability. However, the study confirmed that this dimension was not a dominant factor for the QMNPSL. The implication would be disastrous as the situation exhibited the inability of the QMNPSL in controlling and monitoring the strategic implementation of the school plan. However the study did not able to confirm the specific derailment of the strategic process as the study only focused on the presence (or absence) of the strategic leadership characteristics among the QMNPSL for QSEIP.

Although in terms of ORGCAPAB, the study confirmed that there were three dominant dimensions (STRORIENTAT, STRTRANSLAT & STRALIGNMEN) among the QMNPSL concerned. However, as a contrast, the study also confirmed that the QMNPSL for QSEIP did not possess two dominant qualities, STRINTERVEN and STRCOMPETE that were extremely important to them. In-depth study of how these imbalances of characteristics affect the strategic leadership performance of the QMNPSL of QSEIP is needed here.

## **5.2 Individual Characteristics of the QMNPSL**

The study proved and confirmed that QMNPSL for QSEIP possessed three (out of four) dimensions of individual characteristics (INDVCHAR) of strategic leadership characteristics as discussed earlier. The dimensions as confirmed in the study by CFA were "a dissatisfaction or restless with the present" (RESTLESSNESS), "absorptive capacity" (ABSORPTIVE) and "adaptive capacity" (ADAPTIVE).

Pertaining to "a dissatisfaction or restless with the present" (RESTLESSNESS), the study proved that the QMNPSL possessed this particular individual characteristic. Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004) described this characteristic dimension as one of the most important aspect of the strategic leadership characteristics because "vision without action is merely a dream and while vision with action can change the world" (Barker, 1992). From this point, the stakeholders could expect the best from the QMNPSL of QSEIP and thus enable to fulfill the "third goal of Malaysian EDMP (2006-2010).

The study also proved and confirmed the presence of the second dimension of the individual characteristics of strategic leadership. As described by Davies (2004), Davies and Davies (2004), one of the most important aspects of the individual characteristic was the QMNPSL capacity and ability to absorb the available information



(ABSORPTIVE) which obviously important for the students' performance achievement. Bryson (2003) emphasized, by having this capability and capacity, the school leaders were able to conduct the strategic analyses (including environmental or situational aspects) prior to the preparation of the school strategic development planning. Preedy, Glatter and Wise (2003) supported and emphasized the importance of the internal and external environment scanning as well as the outcome of its interpretations. Thus, all QMNPSL for QSEIP should see that ongoing learning, through interaction with environmental information, was equally important in developing the individual's and organization's capacities to interpret external events and identify key trends that needed to be responded to (Senge, 1990).

The perception of the QMNPSL deputies supported the presence of "adaptive capacity" (ADAPTIVE) characteristics among the QMNPSL for QSEIP. The finding of this study clearly exhibited this. In accordance with the strategic planning literature (Bryson, 2003), the adaptive capacity characteristic of a leader is deem important. By having this characteristic, the QMNPSL might be able to adopt and adapt the generated strategies following the changes in the environment. This ability is vital to a strategic leader, as the effective strategies generated would ensure the achievement of the organizational goals. The creativity and the authentic experiences of the strategic leaders would also influence and affect ones' adaptive capacity.

Despite of having three dominant individual characteristics (RESTLESSNESS, ABSORPTIVE & ADAPTIVE) the study also proved and confirmed that the QMNPSL for QSEIP did not possess the "leadership wisdom" (WISDOM) which was a central element of leadership (Rowley, 2006) and hence a very important characteristic for a strategic leader. The literature described leadership's wisdom comprised intellectual aspect, wise judgment; believe in the team's ability and excellent application of knowledge for the organizational success (Bierly III, Kessler, Christensen, 2000; Small, 2004; Rowley, 2006 a & b; Bennet and Bennet, 2008). With the absence of WISDOM characteristic among the QMNPSL for QSEIP, what the stakeholders of QMNPSL could expect the best out of them? What would be the destiny of an organization that led by a non-wisdom leader? (Small, 2004). As a conclusion, again the study believed that these individual characteristics dimensions of strategic leadership characteristics of QMNPSL were deemed important for the success of QSEIP. Bierly III, Kessler, and Christensen (2000) suggested three important drivers for the development of organizational and leadership wisdom: experience, passion to learn and spirituality. This implicates at least a change of policy particularly in leadership and management development programs of QMNPSL in future (Small, 2004). The success of the implementation would be able to propel the schools well ahead and hence successfully fulfill the third goal of the Malaysian EDMP (2006-2010).

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Pertaining to the study, several limitations and hindrances cropped up when the study commenced. The most prominent limitation was the lack of response from



the respondents especially towards the end of the data collection period (about two months). There were instances where at least thirty (30) envelopes (containing at least 90 completed questionnaires) came in two months later (after the data collection deadline). There were also situations where three different senior management teachers provided three different demographic data although they were from the same school.

Generally, the study provides us with some insight on the status of the strategic leadership characteristics among the QMNPSL for QSEIP. The study also confirmed that all QMNPSL generally possessed six (out of nine) dominant strategic leadership characteristics as suggested by Davies (2003). Despite that, there was a setback as the QMNPSL concerned also found to be lacking in three important strategic dimensions that too important for the success of the schools. The implications could be very great as it might hinder the achievement of the MoEM's Master Plan (2006-2010) strategic goals. The findings from this study will obviously enhance the nation's indigenous knowledge in the area of strategic leadership characteristics for educational leaders that finally ensures the Malaysian quality education.



